

HAZEL GREEN HERALD.

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NUMBER 18.

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JOHN SPANIARD NICKELL.

His Autobiography of Adventure and Sport in Field and Forest.

[CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK.]

I arrived at the foot hills of the Frozen mountains at the head of Red river the same evening barely in time to build my camp, and after a hastily prepared meal and lassoing and feeding my horse, I retired for the night. I arose early next morning and soon dispatched breakfast and feeding my dog and beast, and was out in the mountains in an incredible short time. It was a beautiful morning. The air was soft and balmy, a gentle breeze was floating through the trees and undergrowth and along the mountain sides. Many wild flowers were budding and blooming. The trees were opening their foliage. The birds, too, had set up their lyric notes in a thousand songs as if to dignify the splendor of the rising sun, which could only be seen on the tree tops in the far off distance. All nature presented an aspect of loveliness as beautiful as a dream of heaven charmed and awed by the exquisite scenes of nature that surrounded me. I pushed forward until I reached the apex of a spur of a ridge that extended to the main dividing Frozen mountain. There was then before me an undulating landscape extending several miles in the distance. As I stood there in wonder and admiration at the enchanting scenes around me, I saw just as they were reaching the summit of a hill, a herd of deer—sixteen in number. They were not in range of my rifle and had discovered me, and having the advantage of the wind I took cover behind a clump of bushes and waited their approach. There were three old bucks and four smaller ones. As they slowly advanced it seemed that the old bucks prided themselves in parading and displaying their majestic forms and stately antlers to the other members of the herd. Often they would walk in advance raising their white feather and antlers high in the air as if to court the favor and respect of all the others by their beauty, haughty pride and self aggrandizement.

At last they came in range of my rifle, and as quick as thought I fired, and at the report of my rifle the largest buck in the herd bounded up several feet high and fell dead. At this the remainder stood amazed and stolid, not realizing their perilous condition until I had re-loaded my gun and killed the next largest buck in the gang. At this they bounded off with the swiftness of the wind and were soon lost to sight and hearing. These were among the largest and fattest deer I ever killed. The acorn, beech and chestnut crop of the preceding year upon which they feasted was yet plentiful. I managed by means of lever power to hang up my deer and take out their entrails. I then proceeded on another hunt and had not gone exceeding a mile when I saw another herd in the head of a deep ravine. Upon observation I discovered the wind was contrary, and I had to retrace my steps and take cover behind the opposite side of the mountain in order to gain their rear and the advantage of the wind. In this I finally succeeded without their discovery of my maneuver, and in less time than it takes to write it I had killed a large barren doe, which was in as equally good condition as either of the bucks. I soon had her hung and dressed. It was then about twelve o'clock and the weather being moderately warm, I knew it was important to make for home and salt down my deer as soon as possible.

So it was not long before I reached and broke up camp, saddled my horse to return to my deer. These I had to carry one at the time to the nearest house, a distance of six miles away. Just as I came in sight of the last deer I had killed and within easy gun shot, I discovered a huge monster of some description eating the offals of the deer. Upon close examination I discovered it was a catamount, but of such extraordinary size that I was really alarmed. I knew there was but one alternative, and that was to kill it or do worse. So I fired, but the ball took effect too far back in the body to be fatal, and as I was re-loading my gun I saw him standing on, his hind feet scenting in every direction. Finally he got my course, turned his hair the wrong way and bounded toward me, all the time uttering such savage shrieks and

yells, and hoarse growls that it made the very blood curdle cold in my veins; but I lost no time in firing the second shot which penetrated his heart. Yet the infuriated beast continued his screams and yell till he came within five feet of where I stood and dropped dead. His body measured five and one-half feet. He was the largest animal of his species that I have ever seen or heard tell of.

After carrying my deer home and doing some work on the farm it was then too late in the season for hunting. So I waited till August, when, according to their custom, deer in large numbers visit after night what we called "the licks." A deer lick is simply a spring the water of which is strongly impregnated with iron and sulphur. At these springs the deer come and suck, and this water has the same salutary effect upon them that salt has upon the domestic animal. When the proper time came I made my arrangements to go to a lick that I had learned was well attended. Great care, pains and caution have to be taken in the preparation for watching licks. I arrived in the neighborhood, staid over night, and early next morning I built my blind and scaffold. The blind is simply a covert. The scaffold is a rude elevated construction upon which you keep live coals of fire. In the meantime you have prepared a sufficient quantity of fine splinters out of the richest pine you can get which will ignite the moment it touches the coals, and will illuminate the whole surrounding forest. Being thus prepared I returned to my blind about sun down, and took my stand and remained almost motionless till about an hour in the night. I heard some deer coming down the mountain side right in the direction of where I was located, and the wind being contrary they soon scented me, gave a few shrill whistles and ran away.

The same thing was repeated several times during the night until I became discouraged and dropped off in a dose of sleep, but it was only a cat nap. On awakening I could distinctly hear some deer sucking in the lick, and I touched my pine splinters to the coals of fire on my scaffold, and when the light shone out there stood an old buck and two does intently sucking away at the water, and apparently oblivious to all their surroundings. For the first time in my life I became nervous and shaky, but no time was to be lost. I fired away, and at the report of my gun the old buck fell dead. As the does ran up the hill I saw that one of them was badly wounded. I put my dog after the wounded deer which he caught before she reached the top of the mountain, which was about a mile distant. I managed to hang and dress the buck and by this time it was daylight. I then went to where my dog was watching the deer he had caught and killed. With much difficulty I dragged it down the mountain to a place I could reach with my horse. Upon examination I found that my shot had broken the buck's neck and passed on and broke the shoulder of the doe. I visited these licks several times during this summer, and never went home without carrying a deer; but sometimes I would remain three or four days, and lose as many nights' sleep.

The following fall I made preparations for an extended hunt, and pitched my camp precisely on the same spot I had occupied the previous spring. The weather was just cool enough to be pleasant, a gentle breeze blowing, the sky clear, a crystal light frost at night purified the atmosphere and made it vigorous and healthful. I was so much elated with the promising prospects of a successful adventure that I arose before day next morning, and after going through the regular routine of preparation, and while twilight was still lingering I was out in the mountains. I traveled on for several miles but failed to see a single deer. I could find plenty of fresh sign, but nothing else in this way. And with the same result I traveled until about two o'clock in the evening when I turned my course in the direction of my camp. I had not proceeded far till I saw a large herd feeding on chestnuts that was falling from a number of trees that covered a plateau of land just beyond a rivulet coursing its way down the mountain. After taking the usual precaution, I approached in close range, and selecting the

largest buck I took a steady aim and fired. Instead of the deer falling dead as I expected, not one moved nor gave any attention to the report of my rifle. I at once reloaded and fired the second time selecting another deer, but with the same result; and after shooting several times I carefully wiped out my gun and re-loaded and taking a rest from the side of a tree and when I fired I saw the bullet strike a tree twenty feet above the deer I shot at. By this I knew my gun was "spelled," as we called it in the common parlance of that day; but this was not at all an uncommon occurrence as I can testify to myself, as the same thing happened to me often afterwards. However, this gave me more trouble than anything of its character that ever did befall me, and while yet reflecting upon what course to pursue I happened to remember Mr. James Cope, who lived some ten miles distant and was an excellent gentleman. And as I had learned was well skilled in the art and manner of using exorcisms by which means he could take the spell off of the gun. So I immediately went to his house and related the circumstances of my misfortune to which he made no reply, but took my gun and made a circle around him and then went on with some strange manœuvres, repeating incantations, all of which I did not understand, and finally loaded my gun and handed it to me, and told me to shoot at the first deer I saw, let the distance be long or short, and I would likely have some trouble with it.

I returned to my camp, and early next morning reluctantly ventured out again, but not without some evil forebodings. I went on and in the course of two hours I saw a small herd leisurely feeding along the spur of a ridge in short rifle range, and without any hesitation I fired at the first one I saw, which was a three spike buck. He made a few jumps forward and fell. After reloading I went to where he laid, but in an instant he was upon his feet, his hair raised on its end, his green bloodshot eyes flashing fire, and I had barely time to avoid his deadly aim at me by escaping behind a small tree that stood close by, his horn striking the tree and throwing bark in my eyes until I was almost blinded. In my sudden and hasty effort to escape I struck the breech of my gun against a springy bush and knocked it out of my hand five feet away.

LETTER FROM IOWA.

Miles Murphy Writes Interestingly About That Country.
Exod, Iowa, July 20.

SPENCER COOPER, Hazel Green, Ky.
After long neglect, I thought I would write a few lines to the dear old HERALD to give you and your readers some idea of my whereabouts and travels since I left old Kentucky, the place of my birth, and where I spent my boyhood days in gleeful sports roaming over the valleys, and vine-clad hills, where satisfaction and contentment of mind emitted their sweetest odors on my wayward life.

I left Kentucky September 21, 1892, and made my way toward the Sunny South and after traveling three days and nights we landed in the central part of the lone star state, where I remained 14 months, or at least long enough to see to my satisfaction that we had not as yet reached the promised land, nor any part of it. So, after winding up my business there I determined to seek the regions of the north and after two days and nights landed in Bedford, Iowa, Nov. 1st, 1893. travel over both mountains and prairies. After a study of the country for some time, I bought land and located seven miles southeast of Bedford, and in the vicinity of Exod. This country consists of beautiful rolling prairies which are very fertile and productive. Vegetables of all kinds grow in abundance. From what I have seen, and what I can see now of the products of this country, and the amount of live stock fed and shipped from here to other parts of the world, I am made to be thoroughly satisfied and contented to make this my home in the future.

But there is never a home so well satisfied but something could improve it a little, and enclosed you will please find 50 cents for which send me THE HERALD six months, for my satisfaction is not completed without it. Respectfully,
MILES J. MURPHY.